

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN  
NORTHERN DIVISION

MARVIN D. HUGHES #182524,

Petitioner,

v.

Case No. 2:07-cv-211  
HON. ROBERT HOLMES BELL

DAVE BERGH,

Respondent.

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**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Petitioner Marvin D. Hughes filed this petition for writ of habeas corpus challenging the December 8, 2006, denial of parole. Petitioner is presently incarcerated at the Alger Maximum Correctional Facility (LMF) and is serving a 20 to 60 year sentence as a result of two armed robbery convictions. Petitioner claims that his due process rights were violated because one of the reasons relied on by the Parole Board for denial of parole was that Petitioner's crime involved "physical or psychological torture." Petitioner contends that this is inaccurate. In addition, Petitioner states that he was denied access to his parole file, which violates his First Amendment right of access to the courts.

Promptly after the filing of a petition for habeas corpus, the court must undertake a preliminary review of the petition to determine whether "it plainly appears from the face of the petition and any exhibits annexed to it that the petitioner is not entitled to relief in the district court." Rule 4, RULES GOVERNING § 2254 CASES; *see* 28 U.S.C. § 2243. If so, the petition must be summarily dismissed. Rule 4; *see Allen v Perini*, 424 F.2d 134, 141 (6th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 400 U.S. 906 (1970) (district court has the duty to "screen out" petitions that lack merit on their face). A

dismissal under Rule 4 includes those petitions which raise legally frivolous claims, as well as those containing factual allegations that are palpably incredible or false. *Carson v. Burke*, 178 F.3d 434, 436-37 (6th Cir. 1999). After undertaking the review required by Rule 4, the undersigned recommends that petitioner's application for habeas corpus be denied.

Before the court may grant habeas relief to a state prisoner, the prisoner must exhaust remedies available in the state courts. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(b)(1); *O'Sullivan v. Boerckel*, 526 U.S. 838, 842 (1999). However, under recent statutory and rule amendments by the Michigan Legislature and Michigan Supreme Court, respectively, a prisoner no longer has an ability to appeal a parole denial under state law. The former version of MCL 791.234(8) provided that the grant or denial of parole by the Michigan Parole Board could be appealed to the circuit court by the prisoner, prosecutor or victim. *See* MCL 791.234(8) (West. 1999). The new version eliminated the ability of a prisoner to appeal a parole denial, and provides only that a grant of release on parole may be appealed by the prosecutor or the victim. *See* MCL 791.234(9) (as amended by 1999 Mich. Pub. Acts 191). The legislation was approved on November 24, 1999. Following the lead of the Michigan Legislature, the Michigan Supreme Court amended Michigan Court Rule 7.104, effective March 10, 2000, eliminating the provisions regarding the methods by which a prisoner could appeal a parole denial. *See* M.C.R. 7.104(D)(1), (2)(a). Consequently, because state law prohibits a prisoner from appealing a parole denial, petitioner has no available state court remedy in which to exhaust his claims.

As noted above, Petitioner is claiming that the actions of the Parole Board violated his right to procedural due process. However, "there is no constitutional or inherent right of a convicted person to be conditionally released before the expiration of a valid sentence." *Greenholtz v. Nebraska Penal Inmates*, 442 U.S. 1, 7 (1979); *see also Board of Pardons v. Allen*, 482 U.S. 369, 373, 107 S. Ct. 2415, 2418 (1987) (the presence of a parole system by itself does not give rise to a

constitutionally protected liberty interest in parole release). An inmate's interest in the mere possibility of parole is not protected by due process. *Greenholtz*, 442 U.S. at 10-11; *Wagner v. Gilligan*, 609 F.2d 866, 867 (1979). Rather, a liberty interest is present only if state law entitles an inmate to release on parole. *Inmates of Orient Corr. Inst. v. Ohio State Adult Parole Auth.*, 929 F.2d 233, 235 (6th Cir. 1991).

Where a state's parole statute is purely discretionary and does not mandate a presumption of release, there is no protected statutory entitlement to parole on which a due process claim could be grounded. *Greenholtz*, 442 U.S. at 9-11; *Wagner*, 609 F.2d at 867. The Sixth Circuit, noting "the broad powers of the Michigan procedural authorities to deny parole," has held that the Michigan system does not create a liberty interest in parole. *Sweeton v. Brown*, 27 F.3d 1162, 1164-65 (6th Cir. 1994) (en banc), *cert. denied*, 513 U.S. 1158 (1995). In unpublished decisions, the Sixth Circuit also has held that particular parts of Michigan's statutory parole scheme do not create a liberty interest in parole. *See Fifer v. Michigan Dep't of Corr.*, No. 96-2322, 1997 WL 681518, at \*1 (6th Cir. Oct. 30, 1997); *Moran v. McGinnis*, No. 95-1330, 1996 WL 304344, at \*2 (6th Cir. June 5, 1996); *Vertin v. Gabry*, No. 94-2267, 1995 WL 613692, at \*1 (6th Cir. Oct. 18, 1995); *Leaphart v. Gach*, No. 95-1639, 1995 WL 734480, at \*2 (6th Cir. Dec. 11, 1995), *cert. denied*, 522 U.S. 1057 (1998); *Janiskee v. Michigan Dep't of Corr.*, No. 91-1103, 1991 WL 76181, at \*1 (6th Cir. May 9, 1991); *Neff v. Johnson*, No. 92-1818, 1993 WL 11880, at \*1 (6th Cir. Jan. 21, 1993); *Haynes v. Hudson*, No. 89-2006, 1990 WL 41025, at \*1 (6th Cir. April 10, 1990). Further, the Michigan Supreme Court has recognized that there is no liberty interest in parole under the Michigan system. *Glover v. Michigan Parole Bd.*, 596 N.W.2d 598, 603-04 (Mich. 1999). Accordingly, petitioner has no liberty interest at stake. Because petitioner has no liberty interest at

stake, he fails to state a claim for a violation of his procedural due process rights. *See Sweeton*, 27 F.3d at 1164-65.

In addition, the undersigned notes that Petitioner's access to courts claim lacks merit. In *Bounds v. Smith*, 430 U.S. 817 (1977), the Supreme Court recognized a prisoner's fundamental right of access to the courts. While the right of access to the courts does not allow a State to prevent an inmate from bringing a grievance to court, it also does not require the State to enable a prisoner to discover grievances or litigate effectively. *Lewis v. Casey*, 518 U.S. 343 (1996). Thus, *Bounds* did not create an abstract, free-standing right to a law library, litigation tools, or legal assistance. *Id.* at 351 (1996). Further, the right may be limited by legitimate penological goals, such as maintaining security and preventing fire or sanitation hazards. *See Acord v. Brown*, No. 91-1865, 1992 WL 58975 (6th Cir. March 26, 1992); *Hadix v. Johnson*, No. 86-1701, 1988 WL 24204 (6th Cir. March 17, 1988); *Wagner v. Rees*, No. 85-5637, 1985 WL 14025 (6th Cir. Nov. 8, 1985).

To state a claim, an inmate must show that any shortcomings in the library, litigation tools, or legal assistance caused actual injury in his pursuit of a legal claim. *Lewis*, 518 U.S. at 351; *Talley-Bey*, 168 F.3d at 886; *Kensu v. Haigh*, 87 F.3d 172, 175 (6th Cir. 1996); *Pilgrim v. Littlefield*, 92 F.3d 413, 416 (6th Cir. 1996); *Walker v. Mintzes*, 771 F.2d 920, 932 (6th Cir. 1985). In this case, Petitioner's complaint relates to the refusal to provide him with his parole file. The parole process is not a legal claim before a court. Therefore, the denial of his file did not affect any type of "legal" process. Accordingly, Petitioner's access to courts claim is properly dismissed.

In summary, the undersigned concludes that petitioner's claims are without merit and therefore recommends that this Court dismiss the petition with prejudice.

In addition, if petitioner should choose to appeal this action, I recommend that a certificate of appealability be denied as to each issue raised by the petitioner in this application for

habeas corpus relief. Under 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2), the court must determine whether a certificate of appealability should be granted. A certificate should issue if petitioner has demonstrated a “substantial showing of a denial of a constitutional right.” 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). A dismissal of petitioner’s action under Rule 4 of the Rules Governing § 2254 Cases is a determination that the habeas action, on its face, lacks sufficient merit to warrant service. It would be highly unlikely for this court to grant a certificate, thus indicating to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals that an issue merits review, if the court has already determined that the action is so lacking in merit that service is not warranted. *See Love v. Butler*, 952 F.2d 10 (1st Cir. 1991) (it is “somewhat anomalous” for the court to summarily dismiss under Rule 4 and grant a certificate); *Hendricks v. Vasquez*, 908 F.2d 490 (9th Cir. 1990) (requiring reversal where court summarily dismissed under Rule 4 but granted certificate); *Dory v. Commissioner of Correction of the State of New York*, 865 F.2d 44, 46 (2d Cir. 1989) (it was “intrinsically contradictory” to grant a certificate when habeas action does not warrant service under Rule 4); *Williams v. Kullman*, 722 F.2d 1048, 1050 n.1 (2d Cir. 1983) (issuing certificate would be inconsistent with a summary dismissal).

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals has disapproved issuance of blanket denials of a certificate of appealability. *Murphy v. Ohio*, 263 F.3d 466 (6th Cir. Aug. 27, 2001). Rather, the district court must “engage in a reasoned assessment of each claim” to determine whether a certificate is warranted. *Id.* Each issue must be considered under the standards set forth by the Supreme Court in *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473 (2000). *Murphy*, 263 F.3d 466 (6th Cir. Aug. 27, 2001). Consequently, the undersigned has examined each of petitioner’s claims under the *Slack* standard.

Under *Slack*, 529 U.S. at 484, to warrant a grant of the certificate, “[t]he petitioner must demonstrate that reasonable jurists would find the district court’s assessment of the

constitutional claims debatable or wrong.” The undersigned concludes that reasonable jurists could not find that a dismissal of this action was debatable or wrong because petitioner has no constitutional right to parole, so that the denial of such does not satisfy 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). Therefore, the undersigned recommends that the court deny petitioner a certificate of appealability.

NOTICE TO PARTIES: Objections to this Report and Recommendation must be served on opposing parties and filed with the Clerk of the Court within ten (10) days of receipt of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b); W.D. Mich. LCivR 72.3(b). Failure to file timely objections constitutes a waiver of any further right to appeal. *United States v. Walters*, 638 F.2d 947 (6th Cir. 1981). *See also Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140 (1985).

/s/ Timothy P. Greeley  
TIMOTHY P. GREELEY  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Dated: November 29, 2007